

## 2.4.9 SIGNIFICANT WILDLIFE HABITAT OVERLAY DISTRICT

The purpose of the Significant Wildlife Habitat Overlay District is to protect Reading's Wildlife Travel Corridors and Deer Wintering Habitat by regulating the location and layout of development on these lands. It is not the Town's intention to prevent development in these areas but rather to encourage development that will minimize and mitigate the impacts on the significant wildlife resources.

Wildlife Travel Corridors are physical connections between discrete habitats used by wildlife, such as deer, moose, bear and bobcat, to access resources important to their survival and procreation. Humans can modify or disrupt established travel corridors through the creation of large expanses of open land for agricultural activities or the construction of buildings and roads. This can result in wildlife abandoning critical habitats or being subjected to new hazards, such as increased incidences of vehicle-wildlife encounters. The Wildlife Travel Corridor included within the Significant Wildlife Habitat Overlay District connect habitats in the Arthur Davis Wildlife Management Area, habitats located easterly to Mount Ascutney, and lands consisting of the Alps, immediately south of the Arthur Davis Wildlife Management Area. Maintaining these corridors is critical to the abundance and health of wildlife populations within the town of Reading as well as the surrounding region and the public's enjoyment of these wildlife resources.

Deer Wintering Habitat is defined as "areas of mature softwood cover, with aspects tending towards the south, southeast, southwest, or even westerly and easterly facing slopes"<sup>1</sup>. This habitat is regarded as critical to the health and survival of white-tailed deer subject to severe winter conditions, i.e. deep snow and prolonged sub-freezing temperatures. The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department identifies the Deer Wintering Habitat identified in Reading's Significant Wildlife Habitat Overlay District as being regionally significant providing the deer population with high value, irreplaceable winter cover. Habitat quality and deer use of this Deer Wintering Habitat may be negatively impacted by improper road and housing/building placement and construction as well as human activities that disturb or stress wintering deer.

### **Applicability**

Subdivisions within the Significant Wildlife Habitat Overlay District shall comply with the following standards:

- Development shall be located to the edge of the Significant Wildlife Habitat Overlay District. See Figure 2.4.9.1.
- Development shall be clustered to avoid or minimize encroachment and fragmentation of land within the Significant Wildlife Habitat Overlay District

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<sup>1</sup> Austin et al. 2004.

- Development shall not exceed a maximum lot coverage of 15%
- Proposals for development of parcels in the Significant Wildlife Habitat Overlay District shall be based on consultation with and the recommendations of representatives of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and the applicant shall provide evidence of such consultation as part of the subdivision application. A critical part of the consultation shall include ensuring the continued viability of the Deer Wintering Habitat and Wildlife Travel Corridor and a list of measures the applicant can take to support that viability.

All other development within the Significant Wildlife Habitat Overlay District is encouraged to comply with the above standards.

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